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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000083

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W, INR/ASS
BAGHDAD FOR DMCCULLOUGH

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [MARR](#) [NI](#) [SO](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AND FONMIN DISCUSS PROPOSED NIGERIAN
AMISOM DEPLOYMENT

REF: A. A. SECSTATE 13984

[B. B. USUN 144](#)

[C. C. ABUJA 135](#)

Classified By: Ambassador Robin R. Sanders for reasons 1.4 (b & d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On February 19, the Ambassador again discussed with Foreign Minister Ojo Maduekwe the question of Nigeria's commitment to deploy a battalion of peacekeepers to AMISOM. Drawing on ref A talking points, the Ambassador reiterated the importance of Nigeria standing by its previous commitment (going back two years) to provide the troops. We needed to know now, before the end of February, whether the GON was going to fulfill that commitment or not and that the International Community would be disappointed if the GON failed to live up to its promise. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) In response, Maduekwe claimed that he was the sole supporter right now within the GON for going through with the AMISOM deployment. Both the new Defense Minister and the Service Chiefs were opposing it, he said, arguing that the situation in Mogadishu had shifted from peacekeeping to "peace enforcement" and there was fear that Nigerian soldiers would be returning in body bags. The FonMin added that he had insisted to President Yar'Adua that it was important for Nigeria to stand by its international commitments if it was to maintain its standing in the world. The President had asked him to present a brief laying out his case. Maduekwe told the Ambassador that he was in the process of finalizing that brief, and asked for two weeks (until March 5) to try to win Yar'Adua over.

[1](#)3. (C) The Ambassador replied that we needed not just a reiteration of Nigeria's commitment to provide the battalion, but also a firm date by which the Nigerian forces would have boots on the ground in Somalia; they needed to be there as soon as possible, and no later than the end of May. (FYI: the Ambassador is well aware that ref A calls for the Nigerians to be there by the end of June, but believes that, even if the GON does come back with a new specific commitment, it does not have a very good track record at meeting deadlines. End FYI.) The Ambassador reiterated our offer of equipment and training in the amount of 3-6 million dollars to support such a deployment, but noted that, if Nigeria could not commit to going, the USG would need to

direct these resources elsewhere.

¶4. (C) Maduekwe repeated that he would need two weeks. He would present his brief to the President at the next Cabinet meeting (February 25), but believed Yar'Adua would need at least a little time to digest his arguments and, presumably, the counter-arguments of the Defense Minister. He asked if the USG was prepared to offer additional equipment and other forms of mil-mil engagement to strengthen his case. The Ambassador responded strongly, running through the very long list of what we have provided, are providing, and have offered to the Nigerian military. The FonMin was surprised by the extent of our list, and said Yar'Adua was "not being fully briefed" on the extent of our assistance and cooperation. He asked for a written checklist of the points the Ambassador had provided orally to use as part of his own presentation to the Cabinet. (FYI: the Ambassador's letter with the full comprehensive brief of 5-6 pages, for his delivery to the President, was delivered to the FonMin on February 22. In fact, it was drafted in a manner that the FonMin could hand over directly to President Yar'Adua End FYI.)

¶5. (C) Comment: The FonMin's account of strong opposition within the Ministry of Defense to the AMISOM deployment is consistent with what we have been hearing from the Nigerian military all along. They have resisted the idea, arguing that they are already overextended between their domestic responsibilities in the Niger Delta and other peacekeeping commitments in Darfur which they already feel is a quagmire with no exit strategy for them. We believe getting them to

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move will take strong Presidential leadership, something we have seen little of from Yar'Adua. We note that the next Cabinet meeting after that of February 25 is scheduled for March 4, just before the March 5 date Maduekwe has asked us for. We would frankly be surprised if the GON is able to make a decision that quickly or the decision we want. Maduekwe, although pro-American, an internationalist, and someone who believes this is the right thing to do, is very much in the minority on this issue within the GON. We are not counting on his success. End Comment.

¶6. (U) This cable was transmitted from Lagos as Ambassador Sanders is in Lagos this week.
SANDERS